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Spring 4-2012

The Dialectical Method: A Treatise Hegel Never Wrote

Clark Butler

IPFW, butler@ipfw.edu

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Opus Citation

Clark Butler (2012). *The Dialectical Method: A Treatise Hegel Never Wrote*. *The Dialectical Method: A Treatise Hegel Never Wrote*. First ed. 1-276. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.
http://opus.ipfw.edu/philos_facpubs/222

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PAGES 86-90 IN *The Dialectical Method: A Treatise Hegel Never Wrote*

3. DIALECTICAL DEDUCTION AS NATURAL DEDUCTION

Although Hegel himself nowhere lists rules of deductive dialectical logic as such, the rules presented in this chapter must, I believe, be invoked in an adequate account of such logic. Because they are spontaneously applied in dialectical thinking without external guidance by a tutor, the dialectical thinker need not even be aware of them. In introducing the rules that are followed in dialectical logic, once we have satisfied ourselves that the dialectic proceeds deductively by these rules we will ask whether each new step in the dialectic not only follows deductively but is rationally self-propelled. Each step beyond the first is self-propelled if it is rationally motivated, and not psychologically or materially repelled, purely by consideration of what has already gone before in the dialectic, without any need to be led by an external guiding voice. The fetus needs no schoolmaster in tacitly placing the absolute under the initial description of being mere indeterminate being. Its biological situation gives it no reason to suppose that the absolute is anything but indeterminate being. Yet assuming the dialectic is deductive, we still need a good reason to select one rather than another among countless allowable next lines in the deduction. If we have such a reason, the dialectical deduction is said, in Hegel's terminology, to be "immanent":

[T]here can be no question of a confirmation based on the authority in the ordinary understanding of the term; in the science of the Notion [self-concept] its content and character be guaranteed solely by the *immanent deduction* which contains its genesis and that already lies behind us.²

Thinking is not externally constrained in dialectical logic by a schoolmaster because dialectical rules belong to a logic natural to thinking itself.

The narrow path open to dialectical thinking from its present position excludes a wide range of formally valid lines of deductive inference. However, it is an exaggeration to say that the path of dialectical logic, if it does not face interference from extraneous factors, allows no alternatives at all. Hegel writes: "Science sets forth this formative process in all its detail and necessity . . . the *length* of this path has to be endured, because... each moment is necessary. . . ."³ True, in a complete dialectical construction and scientific dialectical reconstruction of a whole, the dialectically productive absolutization of an abstract determination is followed by the absolutization of but one term of that possibly dyadic determination. We thus at first leave out full articulation of each determination through its different terms. However, once we do make explicit two further terms in a relationship, flexibility exists in the selection of the next term.

Helping, as a three-term relationship, may be articulated by first making explicit reference either to the helper, to the person helped, or to the help given. Similarly, someone instantiating both the determination of being a mother and that of helping the poor on the other side of the tracks can start a dialectic by absolutizing either determination. One's determination of being a mother is a conjunctive determination in which abstraction of either conjunct can start a dialectic.

Dialectically deductive necessity is neither a deterministic necessity nor a necessity of rules that externally constrain and oblige. It is a rationally self-motivated deductive necessity, whose conclusion will enter the general culture and be institutionalized depending on favorable nonlogical conditions. For example, it would be more likely that a slave society would abolish an emancipatory dialectic of lordship and bondage than that such a dialectic would abolish slavery if favorable conditions do not exist in the economic base of the sort which Marx tried to identify. Rules of dialectical logic are not, like some rules of much deductive logic, constraints bearing down on thinking like a logic instructor cautioning against the conversion of "All S are P." But neither

do dialectical rules, like rules of permission in the usual deductive logic, allow thought to proceed arbitrarily and for no good reason in innumerable different directions. From “p” you may infer “p or r,” “p or s,” and so on. Rather, the dialectical rules are natural rules of thought’s spontaneous, self-determining development, and their use is driven in a limited number of directions by insight into a good reason for taking some further step.

The most concrete, coherent, and satisfying description of something, of oneself, or of the absolute starts with the most abstract possible description of it, the description that presupposes the least about it, the description from which more concrete descriptions can be deduced. “[T]hinking must not stop at abstract, formal thinking, for this breaks up the content of truth, but must always develop into concrete thinking, to a cognition that *comprehends* its object.”⁴ Reference to something, to oneself, or to the absolute under some relatively more concrete identifying description dialectically presupposes the prior reference under a more abstract description. If we begin by singling out some whole under a description that is already concrete, we have blurred the more abstract factors in that description:

If impatience with the consideration of the abstract beginning should provoke anyone to say that the beginning should be made not with the beginning, but straightaway with the [concrete] subject matter itself, well then, this subject matter is nothing else than [what is dialectically potential in] the said empty being; for what this subject matter is, that will be explicated only in the development of the science [and cannot be presupposed by it as known before that development from its abstract beginning.]⁵

We distinguish six rules of dialectical deduction with subrules. In all cases the deduction is a deduction of the concrete nature of a complex whole, whether that whole be the absolute (the whole of wholes) or a subwhole of the absolute, and whether the whole be oneself or someone other than oneself. Thus dialectical logic is not restricted to the rationally theological dialectical logic of Hegel’s science of logic. Any property may be taken to be either a monadic or polyadic relationship. In formulating the rules of dialectical logic, we might thus speak of *relationships* rather than *properties* (determinations), allowing for monadic relationships. Just as a property is an instantiated universal, a relationship is an instantiated or coinstantiated relation. A polyadic relation, such as marriage or helping, has two or more terms. Every relation has one or more terms x and y . More generally, with Hegel we shall call relations of one or more terms “determinations” (*Bestimmungen*). A relation between variables x and y becomes a relationship when it is co-instantiated by the values a and b over which those variables range. Parenthood was a polyadic relation even before the evolution of reproductive life, with possible parents and offspring functioning as its terms. Now parenthood is coinstantiated, its terms are actual instances, not merely possible ones. If we take being red as a monadic relation, it can have one or more instances, but as a monadic relation it has no set of coinstantiating instances. Being red has only one term even if it has many instances.

Below is the list of rules and subrules of dialectical logic with symbolization of general statements resulting from the application of each rule. Glance at it without puzzling over it, and return to it after reading the chapter for an overview. Later in the chapter the artificial symbolization will be restated in English. Everyone agrees that the *Science of Logic* is one of the most difficult texts in the philosophical canon. Some scholars (e.g., Errol Harris) do exegesis staying closer than I to the original and very venerable text with which one hesitates to tamper. Yet precisely due to this difficulty, and due to the widely shared belief that post-Hegelian symbolic logic is more perspicuous than the Aristotle’s syllogistic logic—which Hegel himself despised—I opt for rational interpretation, namely, a translation of Hegel’s text into the language of quantification logic. The following list relates Hegel’s language with that of twentieth-century symbolic logic. Taking indirect as well as direct proof to be an accepted use of formal

logic today, elaboration of its place in dialectical logic follows the list of rules.

For an actual translation of the opening section of Hegel's science of logic into a deduction with quantification over property variables, see the appendix. The term "abstract moment," which Hegel often uses, equivocates. It may *either* refer to a determination open to instantiation, as in subject-predicate logic *or* to a "term" as in the logic of relations. This yields two types of abstraction that Hegel does not clearly distinguish, allowing a more analytic account of dialectical logic. Note that symbolically the absolutization of anything (rule 2) means the same as (rule 4) the negation of any other thing under the same description. Indirect proof as used in dialectical logic is longer than a nondialectical direct proof of the same conclusion. The difference is psychological and heuristic. Our use of indirect proof is closer to natural deduction, a pattern of thinking to which the human of mind has repeatedly been drawn both historically and individually in uncovering what we shall call indirectly discovered premises. Hegel did not invent dialectical logic, he discovered something. The translations into formal logic provided here in chapter 5 are meant to highlight some of the underlying structure pertinent to a symbolization of dialectical logic. Although the translations employ the familiar syntax of first- and higher-order logics, the further usual set-theoretic semantics familiar to professional logics is omitted here. A formal semantics that would be adequate for my purposes is beyond what I am trying to achieve, which is to formalize dialectical logic with the more generally familiar tools of quantification logic.